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SENSITIVE
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STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W AND EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PD, R, ECA/PE/V/F,
EEB/TPP/ABT
EEB/TPP/ABT FOR MARCELLA SZYMANSKI AND JACK BOBO
STATE PASS USTR/ERIC ALTBACH AND JARED RAGLAND
USDA FAS FOR OSTA - ELIZABETH JONES
USDA FAS FOR OCRA - ANDREW ANDERSON-SPRECHER
USDOC FOR 4430/ITA/MAC

TAGS: EAGR ETRD KPAO OEXC OIIP SENV TBIO TW
SUBJECT: Taiwan Biotech: 2010 Outreach Proposals

Ref: 09 STATE 122732

¶1. (U) This is an action request for EEB/TPP/ABT. See paragraphs 6, 7, and 12.

Background

¶2. (SBU) Taiwan is the U.S.'s sixth-largest agricultural export market. In 2009, the United States exported more than USD 3.2 billion of agricultural, fish and forest products to Taiwan, half of which was biotech products. Although most Taiwan consumers are unaware of how many biotech agricultural products they use daily, public polling shows most Taiwan people are comfortable consuming biotech products.

¶3. (SBU) However, life science companies, the U.S. grain trade, and the U.S. government have expressed concerns about Taiwan's ability to review and approve newer and more complex biotech events that will enter the market in the near future, such as drought-tolerant corn and nutritionally-enhanced genetically-modified (GM) products. Taiwan authorities have expressed similar concerns, and have requested U.S. assistance in increasing Taiwan's capacity to conduct reviews of new biotech events. [Note: 'Event' refers to each instance of a genetically-engineered organism. For example, the same gene inserted into a given plant genome at two different locations along that plant's DNA would be considered two different events. Two different genes inserted into the same location of two same-species plants would also be considered two different events.
In most cases, regulatory agencies confer new biotech-derived product approvals in terms of events. End note.]

¶4. (SBU) Providing such training assistance to relevant Taiwan authorities will help the island become one of the world's early adopters, commercializers, and exporters of biotechnology. Building up Taiwan's review capacities would also help U.S. exporters avoid costly disruptions to Taiwan-bound exports of new-concept U.S. biotech products.

¶5. (SBU) In addition, a biotech-friendly Taiwan serves as a showcase to other emerging markets of the potential benefits of biotechnology, and would act as a catalyst for adoption of biotech products throughout Asia, particularly Southeast Asia. Taiwan has committed significant resources to domestic biotechnology research, and the Taiwan authorities are committed to sharing the island's biotech know-how with regional trading partners. Taiwan exerts regional leadership on biotech issues by holding an annual biotechnology training course for officials and regulators from across Southeast Asia. This training is co-sponsored by AIT, National Taiwan University, the Council of Agriculture, and several regional agriculture institutes, and supports the overall U.S.

objective of spreading knowledge about the benefits of biotech agriculture to developing countries.

Funding Proposals

¶6. (SBU) To help achieve the goal of keeping Taiwan a positive regional force in agricultural biotechnology, and to avoid potential disruptions in imports of U.S. corn and soybeans, AIT would like to use USD 38,654 of funds available under the 2010 EB Biotechnology Outreach Strategy to improve the Taiwan authorities' biotech application review and risk communication capabilities, and to increase awareness of the benefits of developing a stronger biotech industry among Taiwan's key policy-makers, scientists, agricultural producers, and general public.

Program One

¶7. (U) U.S. Based Capacity-Building and Risk-Communication Activities: Life science companies, Taiwan regulatory authorities, U.S. regulatory authorities, and local research institutes and universities co-sponsor a one week U.S.-based training course with U.S. regulators for Taiwan academics responsible for reviewing biotech applications, and key Taiwan authorities from the newly-formed Taiwan FDA responsible for final approval of biotech applications.

¶8. (U) Cost: USD 25,000. Including:

--No cost for the seminar venues, which would be held in U.S.-government facilities.

--No cost for interpretation services for seminar and other activities, which would be covered by private-sector co-sponsors.

--USD 25,000 for five participants from Taiwan to Washington DC., which includes USD 10,000 for five economy-class airline tickets, USD 15,000 for 10 days worth of Washington DC lodging and MI&E. [Note: Washington, D.C. per diem is USD 300 for most seasons of the year. 300 x 10 x 5 persons = USD 15,000. End note.]

¶9. (SBU) Specific ag biotech issues to be addressed: Proven risk-communication and risk-management strategies concerning future biotech events from the U.S. FDA and CODEX perspective; positive outlook for future growth of Taiwan's indigenous biotech research industry; benefits of biotech products for Taiwan's food producers; benefits of low-pesticide biotech products for Taiwan's environment and public health; benefits of agricultural biotechnology and the adoption and development of biotechnology in other countries; helping Taiwan researchers and regulators improve commercialization of research.

¶10. (SBU) U.S. policy objectives: Our overall effort is focused on giving Taiwan a stake in risk-based biotechnology regulation, and improving Taiwan's ability to review and approve new-concept biotech events, thereby reducing the likelihood of trade disruptions due to concerns about biotechnology. Encouraging Taiwan to commercialize some of its promising biotech research may ensure Taiwan's active support of biotechnology in the WTO and other fora.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: There are 20 Taiwan officials and academics responsible for reviewing biotech applications and giving final approval to biotech applications. Representatives for U.S. agricultural industry groups have indicated to AIT agoffs that the industry groups will build on an AIT training programs by offering to pay for the travel and training costs of the remaining 15 reviewers and approvers. Paying for the first groups of five, therefore, would create a large multiplier effect for U.S. policy objectives. End comment.

Program Two

¶12. (U) Follow-up Taiwan Based Capacity-Building and

Risk-Communication Activities: Co-sponsor regional training in agricultural biotechnology for officials from Southeast Asian countries. The training would be conducted by Taiwan regulatory authorities, U.S. regulatory authorities, local research institutes, and universities.

¶13. (U) Cost: USD 13,654. Including:

--No cost for the seminar venue, which we could hold at the AIT/PAS American Culture Center (ACC) or other co-sponsoring entity facilities.

--No extra cost for seminar lunch and refreshments, which would be covered by the co-sponsor.

--No cost for the Southeast Asian attendees. Taiwan is already committed to paying for these officials' travel to Taiwan and expenses in Taiwan.

--USD 1500 for interpretation services for seminar and other activities.

--USD 500 for publications and small commemorative gifts, such as pens or mugs, which usually cost about USD five per set. Such gifts are customary in Taiwan, and not giving out some small commemorative item to the attendees would be unusual.

--USD 11,654 for one speaker from the U.S., which includes USD 8,550 for one business-class airline ticket, USD 1200 for USD 200 honorarium per day for six days, USD 140 for on-island travel, and $1764 for six days of lodging and MI&E. [Note: Taiwan per diem is USD 294. End note.]

¶14. (SBU) The target audiences: 20-30 scientists and officials from Taiwan and Southeast Asia with additional activities for agricultural researchers at key universities and institutes, food-safety regulation experts, agricultural associations, influential scientists, university students, the general public, and the media sector.

¶15. (SBU) Specific ag biotech issues to be addressed: Proven

risk-communication and risk-management strategies concerning future biotech events from the U.S. FDA and CODEX perspective; positive outlook for future growth of Taiwan's indigenous biotech research industry; benefits of biotech products for Taiwan's food producers; benefits of low-pesticide biotech products for Taiwan's environment and public health; benefits of agricultural biotechnology and the adoption and development of biotechnology in other countries; helping Taiwan researchers and regulators improve the commercialization of research.

¶16. (SBU) U.S. policy objectives: Our overall effort is focused on giving Taiwan a stake in risk-based biotechnology regulation and thereby reducing the likelihood of trade disruptions due to concerns about biotechnology. Encouraging Taiwan to commercialize some of its promising biotech research may ensure Taiwan's active support of biotechnology in the WTO and other fora.

Post POCs

¶17. (U) Post responsible officers and contact information: Economic Officers Matthew O'Connor (o'connorme@state.gov) through July 1, 2010 and George Ward (wardgl@state.gov) after July 1, 2010; FAS Officer Chris Frederick (Chris.Frederick@fas.usda.gov); and Cultural Affairs Officer Scott Robinson (RobinsonSA@state.gov).

STANTON